

[Translation]

Smuggling in Orissa

4991. SHRI VILAS MUTTEMWAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state: (a)

whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned, "Orissa Se Prati Varsh 1 Arab Se Adhik Mulya Ke Ratnon Ki Taskari Hoti Hai" appearing in the daily 'Rashtriya Sahara' (Delhi Edition) dated February 6, 1992,

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Union Government thereto;

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to check such smuggling; and

(d) the number of persons involved in such smuggling arrested during the last two years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d). Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Debt Relief to Farmers

4992. SHRI VIJAY NAVAL PATIL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any scheme to write-off the loans of farmers badly affected due to natural calamities;

(b) if so, the amount of loans written-off during each of the last three years;

(c) whether there are any instructions for

banks not to charge penalty rate of interest from the farmers when they are unable to pay the loans; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI DALBIR SINGH): (a) and (b). No, Sir. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had issued standing instructions to banks in August 1984 for providing relief and rehabilitation assistance to the persons affected by natural calamities such as floods, droughts, cyclones, etc. These guidelines envisage, inter-alia, (i) conversion of short term production loans into medium term loans, (ii) rescheduling/postponing of existing term loan instalments, and (iii) provision of additional need based crop/investment loans, etc.

(c) and (d). RBI has issued instructions to commercial banks regarding interest on agricultural advances as under:

(i) The policy of levying penal rates should be implemented with discrimination and selectively. In order to avoid indiscriminate levying of penal rate, the decisions on penal rate should be taken at a fairly higher level in each bank;

(ii) No penal interest should be charged for loans up to Rs. 25,000/-;

(iii) For limits over Rs.25,000/- the penal rate may vary from 1 per cent to 2.5 per cent over and above the normal rates of interest;

(iv) Interest on current dues should not be compounded;

(v) Total interest debited to an account should not exceed the prin-